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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000035

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL EU SY NL

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/SYRIA: EU UNLIKELY TO ACT QUICKLY ON
SYRIA AGREEMENT

REF: A. SECSTATE 1985

1B. 08 THE HAGUE 927

Classified By: Political & Economic Affairs Counselor Andrew C. Mann fo
r reasons 1.5(b,d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: The Dutch believe the EU is unlikely to move forward quickly on the association agreement with Syria. FM Verhagen would be unlikely to approve such an agreement at this time. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (C) Embassy delivered reftel A points to Peter van der Bloemen, Dutch MFA senior policy adviser for Syria and Lebanon, and also to the Dutch EU Correspondent and Deputy EU Correspondent. Van der Bloemen responded on January 15 that the EU is unlikely to approve the EU-Syria Association Agreement for several months. The most recent agenda for the January 16 PSC meeting did not include Syria on the agenda. Other events, such as Gaza, are more pressing. The Czechs need to consult with the most prominent adversaries on the issue, the UK (opposing) and the French (supporting). And the Czechs do not appear to be as consumed with this issue as the French.

¶13. (C) Van der Bloemen further advised that his FM would be skeptical of approving such an agreement at this time. The agreement would be hard to sell in the Dutch parliament. The lack of Syrian cooperation with the IAEA and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon is "worrying." The Syrians have not given any recent positive signals to the west in support of the association agreement, such as naming an ambassador to Lebanon. Moreover, the Dutch embassy in Damascus reports that the GOS appears "fed up" with the EU discussion, claiming the EU is making new demands. Although van der Bloemen and FM Verhagen think an agreement could be "constructive" in encouraging Syria to support progress in the Middle East, "nothing is happening on the ground," and Verhagen continues to see the need for positive signals from Syria to support an agreement, as he told D/PM Dardari (reftel B).

CULBERTSON